

Message Text

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ACTION LAB-04

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INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1840

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLAB, CE, ILO

SUBJ: DEMARCHE ON 63RD INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE

REF: A. COLOMBO 1782; B. GENEVA 4079

1. AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED ILO AFFAIRS WITH PRIME MINISTER SIRI-MAVO BANDARANAIKE (WHO IS ALSO FOREIGN MINISTER) AT HIS FAREWELL CALL ON NYER MAY 25. HE COVERED RANGE OF ISSUES OF USG CONCERN, INCLUDING ANTI-ISRAEL RESOLUTION, AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 17, AND GENERAL POLITICIZATION. HER COMMENTS IN RESPONSE INCLUDED NO COMMITMENT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BUT DID INDICATE HER AGREEMENT THAT THE ILO SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION OF EXTRANEIOUS ISSUES. DISCUSSION WITH PM CAME JUST BEFORE INSTRUCTIONS ARE TO BE FORMULATED FOR GSL DELEGATION AND WILL, WE HOPE, BE REFLECTED IN THOSE INSTRUCTION.

2. LABOR OFFICER, ON MAY 26, CALLED ON LAKSHMAN DE MEL, HEAD OF GSL DELEGATION TO DISCUSS ONCE AGAIN USG POSITION ON UPCOMING ILO ISSUES. DE MEL IS FULLY AWARE OF THOSE MATTERS OF CONCERN TO THE USG, IS CONVERSANT WITH OUR POSITION, AND KNOWS THE CONSEQUENCES OF A U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ILO. EARLIER CONVERSATIONS HAVE SHOWED HIM TO BE PERSONALLY SYMPATHETIC TO U.S. EFFORTS TO DEPOLITICIZE THE ILO. NEVERTHELESS, HE REFUSED
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TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO PREDICTING DELEGATION'S INSTRUCTIONS NOW BEING FORMULATED. DE MEL DID VOLUNTEER THE INTERESTING INFORMATION THAT THE GSL DELEGATION TO THE FEBRUARY/MARCH GOVERNING BODY WAS INSTRUCTED TO SUPPORT THE USG POSITION ON THE ISRAELI RESOLUTION. (DE MEL DID NOT ATTEND THAT MEETING.)

3. THE EMPLOYER'S DELEGATE C.P. DE SILVA HAS NEVER ATTENDED

AN ILO ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION ABOUT ILO PROCEDURES WHEN HE TALKED WITH THE LABOR OFFICER. IN PARTICULAR, HE WONDERED WHETHER HE HAD MUCH AUTONOMY IN VOTING, OR WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW THE GOVERNMENT LEAD. LABOR OFFICER EXPLAINED THE TRIPARTITE NATURE OF THE ILO AND ITS VOTING PROCEDURES AND ASSURED HIM THAT HE REPRESENTED EMPLOYERS AND NOT GOVERNMENT. UPON HEARING THE EXPOSITION OF THE ISSUES, DE SILVA EXPRESSED HIMSELF WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN AGREEMENT (WITH THE CAVEAT THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO RESERVE JUDGEMENT ON THE GOVERNING BODY CHAIRMANSHIP, SINCE HE DID NOT KNOW THE PERSONALITIES INVOLVED). WE SUGGEST DE SILVA WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT CONTACT FOR U.S. DELEGATION MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY EMPLOYER'S DELEGATE, WHO WILL FIND HIM INTELLIGENT AND SYMPATHETIC BUT UNSURE OF HIMSELF ON THIS NEW TERRAIN.

4. WORKERS' DELEGATE S. THONDAMAN HAS LEFT FOR GENEVA GOVERNING BODY MEETING BUT AS REPORTED REF A DID NOT EXPECT TO STAY FOR MUCH OF CONFERENCE BECAUSE OF POLITICAL AND LABOR PROBLEMS IN SRI LANKA. WE ARE UNSURE OF ILO VOTING RULES IN ABSENCE OF A DELEGATE, BUT NOTE WITH INTEREST THAT HONDAMAN APPARENTLY DID NOT INFORM GSL OF HIS INTENTION OF LEAVING GENEVA EARLY, PERHAPS OUT OF CONCERN THAT ANOTHER DELEGATE WOULD HAVE BEEN APPOINTED IN HIS PLACE.

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